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**LOGAN COUNTY MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON ON FEDERAL DRUG CHARGES**

CHARLESTON, W.Va. –Michael Dehart, 30, of Chapmanville, Logan County, West Virginia was sentenced to 33 months in prison today by United States District Judge John T. Copenhaver, Jr. for possession with intent to distribute a quantity of cocaine. Dehart admitted that on three different occasions in April 2009, he sold cocaine to a confidential informant working with the US 119 Task Force. Dehart further admitted that each of the drug transactions took place at his Chapmanville residence. On June 11, 2009, US 119 Task Force agents arrived at the defendant's residence and arrested him for the controlled buys that had occurred on April 7, April 20, and April 22, 2009. At the time of the arrest, agents observed what appeared to be bags of cocaine on a coffee table inside of the defendant's residence. Dehart was advised of his Miranda rights and agreed to answer agents' questions, admitting there was additional cocaine in a safe in his bedroom. Agents subsequently seized \$600 in U.S. currency and approximately 212.34 grams of cocaine from the defendant's safe. Also seized from the residence was a set a digital scales and two loaded Smith and Wesson handguns.

The US 119 Task Force conducted the investigation. Assistant United States Attorney John Frail handled the prosecution.

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**FAYETTE COUNTY MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON ON ILLEGAL GUN POSSESSION CHARGE**

BECKLEY, W.Va. – Michael Sicilia Jr., 29, of Minden, Fayette County, West Virginia was sentenced yesterday in federal court to 18 months in prison by United States District Judge Irene C. Berger on conspiracy to sell and dispose of stolen firearms. Sicilia pleaded guilty in January to the charge. On November 20, 2009, an Oak Hill, Fayette County residence was burglarized and among the items stolen were approximately 13 firearms and two muzzle loaders. Following the burglary, a resident ("Third Party") of Fayette County was contacted by an individual and asked if he/she was interested in purchasing a number of firearms. The Third Party agreed to meet at a convenience store located in or near Mount Hope, Raleigh County, West Virginia to complete the firearms' transaction. Sicilia admitted that he arrived at the convenience store with a known associate to meet the Third Party. Sicilia further admitted that he and his associate removed nine firearms and two muzzle loaders from a vehicle, and sold them to the Third Party in exchange for \$1000. It was later determined that the nine firearms and two muzzle loaders sold to the Third Party were each stolen during the aforementioned burglary. The defendant admitted that he knew and had reason to believe that the firearms were stolen.

Sicilia was also sentenced to three years of supervised release and ordered to pay \$500 in restitution.

This case is being brought as part of Project Safe Neighborhoods. Project Safe Neighborhoods is a nationwide commitment to reduce gun crime in the United States by networking existing local programs targeting gun crime. The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia established "Hard Time for Gun Crime," which is a community-based initiative in conjunction with Project Safe Neighborhoods to reduce and prevent gun violence throughout southern West Virginia. "Hard Time for Gun Crime" is a partnership that includes the cooperation of neighborhood associations, social service and law enforcement agencies.

The Fayette County Sheriff's Department conducted the investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Monica Schwartz handled the prosecution.

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### **CHARLESTON WOMAN SENTENCED TO PRISON ON FEDERAL DRUG CHARGES**

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Valerie Ponder, 43, of Charleston was sentenced yesterday to 24 months in prison and three years of supervised release by U.S. District Judge John T. Copenhaver, Jr., for possession with intent to distribute quantities of cocaine and oxycodone. Ponder pleaded guilty in January to the charges. On September 17, 2009, the defendant consented to a search of her Charleston residence in which agents with the Special Enforcement Unit of the Charleston Police Department seized suspected cocaine and oxycodone tablets, as well as digital scales and baggies. Ponder further admitted that she had intended to sell both the cocaine and oxycodone that was seized, and that the other material found during the search of her house had been used to weigh and package drugs for resale. The cocaine and oxycodone were submitted to the West Virginia State Police Lab for analysis and proved to be 2.3 grams of cocaine and 112 tablets containing a total of 8.96 grams of oxycodone.

This case was investigated by the Charleston Police Department's Special Enforcement Unit. Assistant United States Attorney John Frail handled the prosecution.

This case was prosecuted as part of an ongoing effort led by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia to combat the illicit sale and misuse of prescription drugs. The U.S. Attorney's Office, joined by various federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, remain committed to aggressively pursuing and shutting down illegal pill trafficking, eliminating open air drug markets and curtailing the spread of opiate painkillers in communities across the Southern District.

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